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Governor McDonnell Declares State of Emergency Ahead of Hurricane Irene

RICHMOND - Governor Bob McDonnell has declared a state of emergency in Virginia in preparation for Hurricane Irene, which is anticipated to affect the Commonwealth over the weekend. Depending on the storm's final track, there is the potential for flooding from both rainfall and storm surge in the eastern part of the state. Winds could potentially reach hurricane strength in the Hampton Roads area; tropical storm force winds could extend much further inland. The ultimate impact of Irene on the Commonwealth will be dependent upon the storm's exact track, which continues to be subject to change over the next 48 hours prior to landfall. A slight deviation by Irene to the east or west would have a significant impact on observable weather in the state.

Eastern Virginia residents who live in low-lying areas should be ready to evacuate ahead of the storm. Citizens should listen to local TV and radio stations for instructions, such as an evacuation order for specific areas, details about evacuation routes and locations of evacuation shelters. If an evacuation is ordered for your area, take your emergency supplies with you, including all medications. For a list of suggested emergency supplies you should collect for your family, visit: <http://www.vaemergency.gov/readyvirginia/getakit>.

The Commonwealth does not plan to reverse lanes on Interstate 64. Residents should review the evacuation routes for their area to determine the best route for their families. In the event that a mandatory evacuation is necessary in specific areas, citizens will be provided further instructions through local and state authorities.

A state of emergency is declared under state law so that state resources can be made available. The governor's emergency declaration ensures a fully coordinated state response to support local initial recovery efforts. A declaration also decreases time needed to get personnel, equipment and supplies on scene.

Speaking about the State of Emergency, Governor McDonnell noted, "We are issuing this state of emergency today as a precautionary measure in order to ensure that we are ready for any potential effects of Hurricane Irene in the Commonwealth. Over the last 24 hours, a number of weather models have shifted the forecasted track of Irene slightly to the west, increasing the potential for inclement weather and potentially dangerous conditions in portions of Virginia. At this time, I encourage all Virginians to gather items they may need this weekend in case of power

outages and disruptions in public services and to make sure their family members and friends are also prepared for this storm. In conjunction with our federal, state and local partners we are monitoring Irene closely, and we will issue further statements and orders as necessary in accordance with the final projected path of the hurricane. At this time, 48 hours before any possible impact of Irene, it is imperative that, in an abundance of caution, all Virginians, state agencies and localities prepare for this storm."

State agencies are preparing by in the following ways:

- The Commonwealth has activated the Virginia Evacuation Coordination Team for Operational Response to assess the storm's potential impact and to take necessary actions.
- The Virginia Emergency Operations Center is coordinating the state's response with increased staffing available 24 hours a day and is now at Response Condition, due to Tuesday's earthquake.
- Virginia State Police personnel have been placed on stand-by and will be pre-positioned to the areas where they will be needed based on the final projected path of the hurricane. The Virginia State Police Swift Water Rescue Team is standing by in strategic locations.
- Chainsaw crews from the Virginia Department of Forestry are standing by with emergency response personnel and to help with debris removal.
- Virginia Department of Transportation crews are ready to clear roads and ensure roads are safe for travel.
- The Virginia National Guard has been authorized to bring personnel on state active duty and begin prepositioning resources.
- The Virginia Department of Health is coordinating with hospitals and long-term care facilities to ensure that they are prepared for storm impacts.

Emergency preparedness is everyone's responsibility. For information about preparing for Hurricane Irene, visit <http://www.vaemergency.gov/>. For general information about the storm, dial 211.

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